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Guidelines are intended to assist elementary school principals in adopting a nongraded or continuous progress plan. Guidelines are presented specifically for (1) committing the faculty and staff of the school to the plan, (2) grouping students, (3) working with parents, and (4) organizing the plan. A bibliography, sample letters to parents, progress checklists, scholarship records, and other sample forms are appended. (HW)

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NONGRADED SCHOOLS

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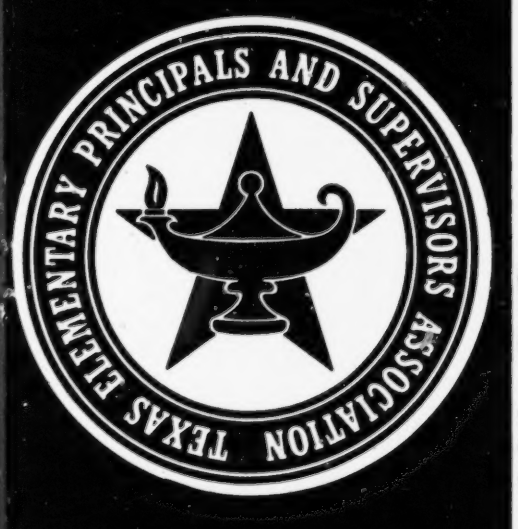

EA 001 879

WILLIAM H. GRAVES, JR.

ELEMENTARY PRINCIPALS GUIDE TO NONGRADED SCHOOLS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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A Joint Study by

The Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association

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Mrs. Christine Rockefeller, Principal,
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Mr. Thomas Saunders, Principal
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Mrs. Shirley Hale, Principal
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Mr. Harvey Palmer, Principal
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Miss Elizabeth Guinn, Primary Supervisor
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PREFACE

In the current scene of educational ferment where innovation, adaptation and research are orders of the day; when the public through mass media is exposed to more information about schools than ever in its history, there is a temptation to strike a blow for instant progress by establishing an instructional media center, a regional reading clinic, a headstart program, an elementary counselling service, or a nongraded school.

The time is propitious — in fact, it is long overdue, for all the benefits which can accrue to children under these various programs. To achieve them in a rational way, however, is another matter. Time must be taken to set reasonable goals for such programs, select and train personnel, procure materials, coordinate local public support, and provide for systematic evaluation of the program or service.

Such is true for the nongraded program as with the other innovations. There is a danger in precipitant actions — and woe betide the administrator who says in April, "We are going to have a nongraded elementary organization in September!" He may have the name but not the game! Substantial progress in education ventures are not won that easily.

There *are* ways, however, to more successfully meet the challenge of helping children realize their best potential as "worthy, respected and productive citizens" in the best tradition of democracy, and a nongraded system of organization *can* contribute to the attendant and necessary task of meeting students' individual differences.

The following suggestions are designed to help the principal toward this end:

The emphasis throughout this report is on *total curriculum development,* however, because nongraded schools are not ends in themselves — to be achieved by merely putting on the cloak; they are, rather, facilitating arrangements, and like team-teaching or parent conferences, cannot of themselves create "instant progress".

Cooperative development is mentioned here as a key phrase, for in the building of a sound program the administrator will call on the creative genius of the staff to make the adoptions that go with this kind of a system to make it work most easily for his school.

It is for this reason that one cannot say there is "one" system of nongrading — nor "one" system of "continuous progress". The system which is developed by the teachers and principal cooperatively for each school will be the best one for that school. Even within a single district where two or more schools have nongraded or continuous progress arrangements, the manner in which they are implemented will vary from school to school, because each staff has its own creative ability (and limitations) in implementing the basic system.

Whether or not improved instruction results from nongradedness — whether or not pupils learn more or whether or not their capacity for learning is improved — depends entirely upon the extent to which the principal and his teachers seriously address themselves to these tasks over and above the fact of nongradedness.

Human variables and statistical limitations in evaluative processes have prevented clear-cut positive statements to be made regarding the relation of nongradedness to achievement.

The best conclusions research literature has contributed to date are:

1) Nongradedness, per se, will not adversely affect achievement;

2) About 50 percent of the schools which have attempted to measure the relationship between nongradedness and achievement report an improvement in one way or another;

3) Reputable specialists in the field consider most of these research reports questionable at best, and

4) An example of research conducted in four Texas schools covering a period from 1961 to 1964 is given in the Appendix Tables Q and R.

The following guide will attempt to show how nongraded school organization can be designed for maximum effect on total development of the pupil, subscribing to the philosophy that:

1) The elementary school years are formative ones, therefore, the major role of the school is to orient the student toward a *maximum capacity* for learning and all that it implies — rather than seek instant success in one or several of the curriculum areas;

2) That since children are inherently different among themselves, there can be no single course of study that prescribes the same educational fare for all. Opportunities must be created for children to learn at rates which are compatible to their stage of gowth in all areas (not just reading and mathematics) and opportunities must be created to permit children to explore avenues of interest to them, which contribute to total growth, support an attitude of continuing inquiry, and yet may not necessarily be found in tne common course of study either by subject classification or by level of difficulty of understanding;

3) That since children develop intellectually (as well as in other ways) at varying rates and in varying degrees, it is of paramount importance to establish "bench marks", "review periods", or frequent and systematic collateral evaluation, so that teaching strategies can be devised all during the year, to meet the new and different growth demands of the student.

It is in fact this last postulate which has the greatest hope for the nongraded school to accomplish what the graded school did not; and that is a systematic and frequent diagnosis of the pupil's learning for the purpose of creating more appropriate learning experiences for him.

Schools do not by and large, do this at present — especially in reading. By taking the "rule of two-thirds" for example, in estimating the span of years in any one grade we would find that in grade four there would be a six year span in mental age among the students.

If children are making average progress for their mental age, it would be necessary in this instance in grade four to offer reading instruction appropriate to children from first grade reading level to seventh grade reading level. The more common practice, however, is to offer three reading groups for the class — one at grade level, and two below.

The nongraded philosophy tries to overcome this limitation in meeting children's needs. Again the extent to which it is successful depends on what departures from traditional practice any school is willing and/or able to make.

If nongradedness were put on a continuum one could ascertain the degree of nongradedness, in part, by looking at the practices in the reading portion of the program. A simple three stage development of nongradedness as measured by reading instruction practice might appear as follows:

	STAGES OF NONGRADEDNESS
STAGE I	Grade labels are removed from all classes. Children are assigned by teachers, rooms and the designation, "Primary, intermediate or elementary." A level designation is made based on a basal text or set of materials. Each classroom has one or two levels at or below traditional grade level.
STAGE II	Grade labels are removed. Each teacher has three or more levels in a room. Levels are based on basal series. No pupil is in a level higher than what his traditional year or grade in school would place him.
STAGE III	Grade levels are removed. Each child is on a level based upon stated developmental skills and competencies without reference to specific basal text organization. Instructional materials are selected upon the basis of diagnosed needs and represent a wide variety of content and sources. No limitation is placed upon the difficulty of the reading materials except that it has instructional value for the student. Individualized reading is a part of the reading program.

Chapter I

HOW TO PREPARE

If you have not read some of the basic references in this field, now is the time to do so. This guide cannot substitute for the wealth of recent material that is available. In fact, so much is becoming available that no bibliography is really complete.

For an introduction to this area, the following items are recommended:

Nongrading in the Elementary School, John L. Tewksbury, Charles E. Merrill Books, Inc., Columbus, Ohio, 1967 (available in paperback).

This book is short, readable and suggestive in that it not only gives the rationale for nongrading, but lists some procedures for grouping, reporting, and teaching.

The Nongraded Elementary School, John I. Goodlad and Robert H. Anderson, Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., New York. Revised edition 1963. (available in paperback).

The 1959 edition of this book created more interest in nongraded schools than any other previous treatise. The 1963 edition, like the 1959 volume, presents excellent research foundation for the present attack on the inadequacies of the traditional graded structure. It contains an excellent bibliography as does the Tewksbury volume mentioned above. Sections are included on grouping, reporting pupil progress, and strategies for implementing the program.

Teaching In A World of Change, Robert Anderson, Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1966 (available in paperback).

This timely book is one of a series in "The Professional Education for Teachers" under the editorship of Paul Woodring.

Chapter Four is devoted to "Theory and Practice in the Nongraded School".

Other pertinent sections of the book deal with the teacher's role in the classroom, team teaching, and the principal's role with staff personnel under "The People Who Work with Teachers", Chapter Six.

The Nongraded Primary School, A Case Study, Lillian Hogan and Murray Fessel. Parker Publishing Company, West Nyack, New York, 1967.

An interesting account of one school's experience in nongrading. Gives intimate details of principal and teacher working together, suggestions for units of study, materials to work with, sample letters to parents, examples of report cards, ways to individualize instruction and procedures for grouping and regrouping students.

Ungrading the Elementary School, Frank R. Dufay, Parker Publishing Company, Inc., West Nyack, New York, 1966.

An informally written account in the personal vein of how another school approached nongradedness. Multi-age grouping, the team approach to curriculum planning and teaching, evaluation of reporting procedures are discussed.

Change and Innovation in the Elementary School, Maurice Hilson, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1965. (available in paperback).

This book is mentioned because it contains much basic information on topics undergirding the nongraded program. Thirty-six methods of grouping are discussed, for example, as well as articles on the advantages and disadvantages of departmentalization. Team teaching and the nongraded program occupy two major sections of the book.

Chapter II

INVOLVING THE STAFF

The second basic step in implementing the nongraded school involves commitment of the faculty and staff of the school.

Most approaches to this commitment will vary according to the nature of the staff. No group of teachers likes to be told "they are going to have a program". Besides being a bit out of the democratic tradition of school administration, it is probably a premature decision and certainly least conducive to enlisting support from the professionals who are going to operate the program.

One of the most widely reported satisfactory procedures employed by principals who have successfully implemented a nongraded program (and are still doing it) is the "indirect" approach.

The indirect approach is not by definition devious, but it seeks to establish knowledge and information from teachers about the inadequacies of the present program. It essentially seeks to defer a decision by the staff until all members have had an opportunity to discuss present and urgent problems regarding the curriculum and how it is presently meeting pupils' individual needs.

John Goodlad, in describing how he worked with his school staff at the laboratory school of the University of California at Los Angeles, said that it took him three years of study with the staff before they proposed a nongraded system of school organization to meet their needs.

Perhaps one need not go to such lengths to insure "readiness" of the staff for such a venture, but it is mandatory that a state of readiness exists.

In most cases, the readiness came about by serious probing under the leadership of the principal, into the problems attendant upon meeting individual differences.

The key to this phase of development in implementing the nongraded program might be found by asking the following questions:

1) What are the learning and growth problems of our students?
2) Is our present method of working satisfactory to meet these problems?
3) How do other schools with pupil populations similar to ours meet these problems?

4) Are there different (and hopefully better) ways of meeting these problems?

5) What solutions can we pose about which we can do something, (as opposed to those which are not in our control)?

6) Are our practices in any way at variance with our basic beliefs about what is best for children?

7) What has the literature in elementary teaching to say most recently about meeting the students' problems which we have identified?

8) What is the range of reading in each classroom?

9) What per cent of our students are doing "failing" work?

10) How much "readiness" do our beginning pupils need?

Such in-service and faculty studies which may be arranged to seek answers to these questions may be either formal or informal, but the most lasting results will be obtained by a formal approach to this phase of self-examination.

Ideally the principal will seek the establishment of a formal staff study, approved by the board of education and including a budget for such necessary items as:

a) some released time for teachers to engage in the study.

b) some consultant service in specific areas.

c) materials for study not now available in quantity for the staff.

d) some field trips to schools where attempts are being made to make instruction more appropriate to the learning needs of children.

In working with staff, inevitably many arguments will be offered pro and con. Perhaps it will help the administrator to consider the nature of nongradedness compared to gradedness as reviewed by Goodlad. A comparison of graded structure versus nongraded structure is presented in Table O, appendix.

Of special interest will be criticism of the nongraded structure and Dr. Anderson's replies to these allegations as shown in his newest book, *Teaching in a World of Change*. Table P of the appendix shows his comments to each of several allegations.

Chapter III

PUPIL CHARACTERISTICS

Inevitably in the study of grouping pupils for instruction, attention will be directed to the nature of the children.

Unfortunately in too many instances, we cannot label pupils on a direct basis of *what* they are (except of course in the case of age), but we must rely on *indirect* measures of how they behave.

When we list all the characteristics of child development, we begin to see the fallacy of grouping them in just one area of performance or criteria, because it becomes immediately apparent how much different they are in other characteristics.

The lesson this procedure shows us is that a fixed or constant grouping for fostering all development is most short-sighted, and simply will not get the job done.

In the past, we have seen the two extremes of grouping in this respect — namely the self-contained classroom where all children are taught a common curriculum and the other extreme, departmentalization, where children are differently grouped (usually on an achievement basis) with different teachers for every subject of study.

To understand the need for grouping in terms of the role of the school it might be easier to view the curriculum or the child's day in two broad areas at first.

Essentially, children are performing two tasks in all their school work. They are either learning the basic elements and methods of communication (as in language arts, reading and mathematics) or they are attempting to use these communications in a functional way (as in social studies, science and health).

The criteria for grouping children in both types of activity, whether in the self-contained setting or by teams of teachers with two or more sections is not necessarily the same.

In grouping children for learning the basic skills we tend to look at their achievement, primarily, because if we are interested in "continuous progress" (as in reading or mathematics). We are concerned with "where they are" and proceed to group them from economy of time in a lesson where as many as possible may profit from the same exercises.

It is at this point where we seem to encounter the most difficulty in grouping, because this initial grouping step seems to take procedence over all other considerations and the total grouping process becomes "frozen" at this point.

To relieve this situation it is suggested that the following precepts for grouping be considered:

1. During the day the child needs to be in different groups for different purposes. (including the self-contained class.)
2. Some activities are more appropriate in large groups (30 to 100 children, for example). Other activities are more appropriate in small groups (1 to 12 children, for example).
3. The procedures for scheduling these instructional groupings should be based upon decisions involving many criteria.
4. Since pupil growth is an active and continuously changing process no system of grouping should continue for more than six to eight weeks without reexamining the criteria used for grouping in the first place.

CRITERIA FOR GROUPING

From school entrance, whether it be at age five or six, there is need to have and use many criteria concerning child growth and development. Sources of this data are varied but depend primarily upon contact with the child.

For this reason pre-school registration data is most useful for it can involve contact not only with the child but his parents as well. Pre-school meetings for parents and children, involving programs of activity for each are encouraged as means to effect not only a mutual understanding of the formal school program that is to follow, but to gather data, both of an objective nature and of a subjective nature, for subsequent grouping purposes.

Data for all stages of grouping from pre-school through grade six will need to involve elements of the following items:

Data	Source
Achievement, aptitude	Standardized, teacher-made, formal and informal tests, teacher observation record of performance on rating scale instruments devised for various tasks.
Home background	Pre-registration contact, school registration form, home visits.
Mental ability	Standardized tests, special performance tests, individually administered intelligence tests.
Social maturity	Teacher observation records, standardized and special scaled instruments.
Physical maturity	Health data, height, weight, and age scales, physical fitness tests, special purpose sensory and motor examinations.
Emotional maturity and Personality type	Teacher observation records, home visit records, specialist reports. Special reports of temperament type (at various stages of development children may need a "mother type" teacher, a male teacher (if you can find one) a "highly structured approach" teacher, etc). This consideration is essentially a need to match personality of teacher to personality needs of child and will be evidenced more as child is better known.
Creativity	Teacher observation records. Useful in consideration of grouping for **functional** learning activities vs **basic** skills.

In all of the above criteria there are essentially two main sources of data: (1) teacher's judgment based on observation and (2) special published evaluation instruments devised for various purposes.

While teacher's judgments based on observation tend to be generally valid, formal written evaluative instruments (performance tests, scales, etc.) are used to supplement the former since they are a form of independent objective evidence and provide a broader base for decision making.

Chapter IV

WORKING WITH PARENTS

Strangely enough, in Texas as in other states where nongraded programs have been introduced, parents have been generally most receptive to work with plans for implementing the program. While this is so, it does not minimize the job, because parents come and parents go and a new set must be oriented every year!

The task is a pleasant one, however, for it affords the rewarding opportunity to show parents the school's vital concern for the individual welfare of their child and at the same time enlists their cooperation in the joint task of educating the child.

Parents should be involved early in the process of planning for a nongraded organization. Those schools who have a history of frequent parent contacts either through scheduled conferences for all pupils or by grade level and other special purpose study groups will be able to communicate more easily with parents than schools which have not previously involved parents in discussions about curriculum, school objectives and other instructionally related matters.

Perhaps the best advice here is:

1) Use the communication means to which the parents have been accustomed.

2) Allow at least one year for the total parent orientation.

3) Wherever possible enlist the parents in helping to plan the communication program.

TIME-TABLE

Whereas no single plan will suit all schools' needs or methods of operation, the following guide is recommended by principals who have experienced this introductory phase of communications to the community:

1. Discuss possibilities of the nongraded program at a parents meeting at least a year before implementation.

2. Plan several small study groups among the parents of children of different ages who will be affected by the program.

3. Provide the news media with complete information of the important steps being taken along the way.
   Note: Do not be misquoted — put it in writing as a formal, typed, news release.

4. Include up-to-date progress reports in newsletters to the parents and other interested patrons on your mailing list.

5. Plan a Spring P.T.A. meeting for reporting plans. Involve (if possible) parents who may have worked on joint teacher-parent committees to make some of the reports.

6. Relate the fall implementation of the program to "preparation for school" summer programs — recommend books, other activities for various age children's groups who will be involved.

7. Send a letter out in late August explaining the program (as a repeat of earlier letters of explanation).
8. Contact and arrange orientation sessions for parents new to the community since May.

An example of one parents' letter is shown in Table VII A and B of the Appendix.

TOPICS FOR PARENTS MEETINGS

At the parents' study groups and at the general parents' meetings the following items will probably be included for discussion:

—Philosophy behind nongradedness.
—Reason for *this* school to consider the plan.
—Relation of the plan to the content curriculum areas now studied.
—New patterns of grouping to be anticipated.
—Operational procedures to be used in monitoring student progress and scheduling groupings.
—Methods of reporting progress to be used.

From this list it becomes immediately obvious that the subjects needed to be covered will take at least two general meetings, preferably supplemented by small group sessions for different parent-pupil age groups.

In preparing for these meetings it is well to observe the following injunctions:

—Make hand-outs so that parents can follow the discussion with typed or printed samples of materials being discussed.
—Make the hand-outs neat and typographically correct (a "finished" product will inspire more confidence than a "rush" job).

FOLLOW-UP MEETINGS

During the fall and spring of the year in which the program is initiated there should be at least one parents' meeting each semester to perform the following tasks:

—Discuss the progress of the program.
—Discuss parents' questions.
—Evaluate progress of the plan.
—Discuss changes and future plans for continuance.
—Enlist parents suggestions as to how they may better fill their role as partners in the total educational venture including the new plan.

Chapter V

ORGANIZING THE PLAN

The principal and the teachers need to have all aspects of the program well in hand prior to the first general session for parents. This normally will take at least one calendar year preceding the first general meeting for parents. The time factor seems long, but it must account

for the fact that in many schools faculty planning sessions may have to be monthly in order to accommodate all the "routine" professional chores which should not be disrupted during the planning for a new program.

Among the critical items which the faculty will be concerned with are the following:

1. Criteria for grouping entering kindergarten or first year pupils. Table C., appendix shows one example of this.

2. Criteria for moving pupils from one level to another. This work, is illustrated by Tables C, D, E, F, L and M. The development of this critera amounts to constructing a teacher's guide for the subject included in the nongraded program including the evaluation critera for pupil progress. An excerpt from such a guide is illustrated in Tables L and M, Appendix.

   Most schools will begin with reading as the subject to be included first and may add other subjects as the need is seen to develop.

   Here a point in philosophy seems necessary since curriculum guides and precise statements of subject matter mastery have a way of "freezing" the program and could easily result in the substitute of a "lock-step" levels program, which certainly is no better than a "lock step" graded structure.

   The danger of linking levels or steps to volumes of books in the state adopted reader program assumes that the development of all children is parallel and exactly synchronized to the development of the level of difficulty of the reader in use. This may or may not be so for all children. The key to a way out of this dilemma is in the construction of the teacher's guide which puts *skills* and competencies *first* and lets the text and other materials become tools for the development of the skill. Under the "skills", "competencies" column, therefore should appear realistic performance goals, keyed not to a single basal series but to include supplementary books and teacher or school prepared materials. The materials column (as in Table L and M should show the variety of materials necessary for use when a child needs to spend twice as long as the "average" youngster to arrive at competence in the skill needed.

   In the ideal or as Dr. Anderson says, "the full-fledged" nongraded program, the child is not moved from one artificial level to another, but he is studied by his teacher and others working with him to see what experiences and materials he needs to learn and these are then provided for him *whether or not* they may be found in his assigned level or some other level of material.

   There is such a wealth of material that may be used to develop various skills that it is virtually impossible to mention all of these in any practical printed guide. A compromise is usually made here by explaining that the guide is not exhaustive but does list an *assortment* of materials available in the school. Team teaching enters the picture here because it has been found that when two or more teachers can enjoy working together, their collective planning for children results in a wider

variety of choices of materials and programs for the children's needs than what a single teacher might contrive.

The practical limitations of teaming for either evaluation of individual pupils or for providing special learning experiences are threefold:

a. The teachers need to be compatible.

b. Planning time and space is necessary.

c. Flexible teaching space facilitates the team arrangement.

3. Reporting to parents.

Inevitably when one changes from a graded form of organization to a nongraded structure despite the comprehensive orientation program which has been developed, parents are apprehensive about progress and are in immediate need to know the difference between a mark based on the *child's* level as opposed to a mark based on a previous grade level.

Most nongraded schools have anticipated this problem and replace the first fall report card with a scheduled teacher conference. This procedure is recommended.

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) of the National Education Association has a monograph on conducting parent-teacher conferences and this activity should be a serious part of the faculty inservice study preceding implementation of such conferences.

Nongraded schools generally find that when using parent teacher conferences as a supplement to or substitute for the report card a fewer number of reporting periods are needed. This is true for several reasons, namely,

a. Parents get more complete and specific reports through the conference and therefore need fewer of them.

b. It takes more time for the school to assemble all the data needed at a good conference.

c. Parents brought into partnership with the school via the parent-teacher conference will have more interim, informal contacts with the school than under the relatively impersonal system of sending a caard home at frequent intervals.

Samples of cards used with and without the conference are shown in Tables G, H, I and J.

Since report cards *per se* are of necessity, such abbreviated forms of communication, it is difficult to set criteria for their format. In nongraded schools the following criteria for the report card are pertinent:

a. The items included for reporting should be *major* items consistent with previously stated (in writing preferably) objectives of the school and its curriculum.

b. Evaluation should include the child's progress on the level of skills to which he is assigned.

c. Evaluation should include the child's progress in applying basic skills in the "functional" parts of the curriculum.

4. Letter grades or numerical ratings ABCD, 90, 80, 70, 60, etc. should be avoided where possible since the card is such a restrictive method of communication and does not permit explanation of the basis upon which the letter or number grade is given.

   These symbols are traditionally tied to the "average" pupil in the traditional graded system which has been abandoned by the act of nongrading.

   Parent-conference time is the place for showing relative age related achievement and age related development characteristics in a setting where time does permit exchange of all the facts deemed important by the parent and the teacher.

5. Nongraded schools are preferring such symbols to show progress as "Excellent", "Satisfactory", "Improving" or "Unsatisfactory" and similar combinations.

   An "Unsatisfactory" mark usually denotes that a conference is needed to discuss some element in the childs development which is hindering his academic progress.

Chapter VI

WHY GO NONGRADED?

Schools which have adopted this system usually do so for one or more of the following reasons:

1. Excessive failure of students to master the grade one program because of language or other cultural handicaps.
2. The recognition of schools that their role is not one of screening out the less able students through the process of giving "failing" and "unsatisfactory" grades, but that rather their role is one of encouragement, developing, and challenging the growing young mind.
3. Recognition that graded structure and graded textbooks do not represent a natural and common or single growth pattern for all children — that flexibility in program is necessary to meet children's needs and that flexibility can only be honestly managed in an unrestricted, nongraded organization.
4. Recognition of the need to evaluate pupil progress more thoroughly and more frequently than once a year in order to plan appropriate learning experiences of all kinds and levels of difficulty throughout the year.

APPENDIX
THE NONGRADED SCHOOL

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Table A

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS

Nongraded Elementary

The elementary schools of the Palomino Independent School District are nongraded. A nongraded school is one which permits children to progress at a rate best suited for them rather than one which expects every child to cover the same amount of material in a given nine-month school year. A graded school requires children who do not satisfactorily complete a grade a year to repeat the entire grade even though they may have mastered a part of it.

In a nongraded school, children are grouped by ability-achievement and progress, at a rate which will be fast enough to challenge them, but not so fast that it will place undue pressure upon them. Removing the time limit will permit some to move faster, to receive instruction in more depth, and to participate in more enrichment experiences. It will permit others to move more slowly, to receive additional drill, and to use additional materials in areas where they are having difficulty.

For the child who will not complete a full grade in nine months there are several advantages. With the pressure removed to complete a given amount of material, he will be able to work with less pressure, and receive a good understanding of materials before progressing to the next level. One of the major benefits will be that of not repeating an entire grade. If a child completes only a half or three-fourths of a grade at the end of the school year, he will begin at that place the following September. (Naturally there will be a review period before moving on to new work.) When he completes a grade, whether it be in November, March or at any time, he moves into the next grade. This will mean that some children will spend six or even seven years completing the five grades* in the elementary school, but they will have gone slowly enough to have received a better foundation.

Some children at six years of age are not truly ready to begin formal learning, though they may later develop into average or better than average students. Most children require some readiness, but some require several months. In a nongraded program, a variety of readiness material is provided to prepare them for formal learning.

Some students need to move at a faster rate than the majority of children. If they are not properly challenged they become disinterested and will probably develop poor study habits. Through experience, we have found it is difficult to challenge these students without moving into the material of the next grade level, although there is some enrichment and depth study which is very beneficial. This will mean that a few children will complete more than a grade in nine months and will move into the next grade at the time they are ready for it. Very few students can complete five year's work in four years, and some of those who do are socially ready to move into the intermediate school. Also, many parents do not want their children to complete school a year early. More adept children move through the first two or three year's work at a faster rate, but in the fourth and fifth grades, they progress more slowly due to the addition of more subject areas. These students have sufficient foundation to receive instruction in more depth than other students and to receive a great deal of enrichment. They will probably be going into the accelerated classes in the secondary schools.

There are also advantages to students moving through the regular program. The teacher will have more time to spend with these students who move at about the same rate. She will also have more time to give to pupils having difficulty in a given area.

Nongraded does away with the classification of first grade, second grade, etc. This does not refer to the letter grading on reports to parents. A, B, C, D and F's are still recorded on their work and report card. There will be fewer F's as the time limit is removed on learning. Formal grades are not given during the readiness period of the first year's work.

Although we do not classify students according to first, second, third, fourth or fifth grade, we do feel that parents should know the rate at which their child is

*In a five year elementary school.

progressing. Individual and group conferences will be held by the teacher with the parents if their child is moving at a rate different from most children. Levels shown on the report card will also tell the parents the rate at which their child is moving. In order to divide the work into smaller units, and also to keep the parent informed, each grade has been divided into four (4) levels. Additional levels have been added to the first year for those needing more readiness and for the bilingual students.

Listed below are the levels for each grade:

GRADE	LEVELS
First	I, II, III, IV
Second	V, VI, VII, VIII
Third	IX, X, XI, XII
Fourth	XIII, XIV, XV, XVI
Fifth	XVII, XVIII, XIX, XX

With the exception of the first grade, each grade is divided into four equal parts. Due to the reading material, the first grade is divided into

Readiness — Level I — 8 weeks (approximately)

Pre-Primer — Level II — 4 weeks (approximately)

Primer — Level III — 12 weeks (approximately)

First Grade — Level IV — 12 weeks (approximately)

Parents should feel free to consult with the teacher and principal if they do not understand the placement of their child. Students will be placed in groups and move as groups, according to ability-achievement. A child may be moved from one group to another depending upon his individual performance. Variance of the time element will likely occur during the first three (3) years resulting in a better foundation which is of utmost importance to every child.

We do not claim that the nongraded program eliminates all problems, but we do feel the problems can be better solved with this type of program. Students who cannot progress satisfactorily under this plan will be recommended to special classes in our nongraded program or to our very fine special education program.

Signed:

Principal or Supervisor

Table B
THE NONGRADED PRIMARY PROGRAM

Date.....

To Parents of Children in First, Second, and Third Grades:

You have been invited to see your children in their classroom groups and to hear about a new plan of reporting on their progress. This plan has been tried successfully in a number of elementary schools in Texas and in other state for fifteen years or more. Children who are participating in this program are said to have better mental health and to make more progress, in most cases, than with the plan we used in the past. This program or plan is called THE NONGRADED PRIMARY PROGRAM. The use of the terms First, Second, and Third Grades is discontinued when talking about the plan and on the report cards. Children are referred to as being in the Primary, Level I, Level II, Level III, Level IV, Level V, Level VI, and Level VII, and VIII as they move along through the program. For example: First Year, Level III; or Second Year, Level V; or Third Year, Level VIII.

Six-year-old children entering school for the first time are different in many ways. Some are short, some are tall; some are thin and others are plump, some are shy while others are not; some are active and some are calm; some can run faster than others; some can talk better and sooner than others. By the same token, some begin to read sooner than others and some progress more easily and more rapidly than others. Each child has his own rate of learning — even brothers and sisters in the same family. All of these six-year-olds have met the minimum requirements for enrolling in public school by being six years of age on or before September 1, 1964.

Our teachers have been studying, testing, and evaluating these children since they entered school at the beginning. Within a few days, some of these children will be moved into other rooms at school as they are grouped according to their levels of readiness for school work. At the start, however, all the beginners were on the same level — Level I. When report cards are sent to you in October, they will be different from those sent you in previous years. They will simply read NONGRADED PRIMARY PROGRAM without mention of the grade. However, the level in which your child is working will be indicated on the report card by his teacher. As your child learns and progresses during the year, the new and succeeding levels will be indicated. There will be no failures or promotions at the end of the year. The teachers will simply indicate on the report card the level at which the child will begin the next year. We suggest nothing be said to these children about "failing" or "passing". We should speak only of learning and continuous progress. Children who normally would have been in the First, Second, or Third Grades in the past will now be on levels as follows:

Level I	**Fun With Tom and Betty**	Reading Readiness Activity before reading books.
Level II	**The Little Red Story Book** **The Little Green Story Book** **The Little Blue Story Book**	Three Pre-Primers.
Level III	**The Little White House**	Primer
Level IV	**On Cherry Street**	First Grade Reader
Level V	**We are Neighbors**	Easy Second Grade Reader
Level VI	**Around the Corner**	Harder Second Grade Reader
Level VII	**Finding New Neighbors**	Easy Third Grade Reader
Level VIII	**Friends Far and Near**	Harder Third Grade Reader

Many children will complete the eight levels in three years; others will require four years to complete the same levels of work. When a child completes all eight levels, however, he will be placed in the Fourth Grade whether it took three or four for the completion. This new plan was an experiment in our school district last year, but we think the majority of pupils, teachers, and parents who participated in it liked it. It is a plan or program which enables teachers to do a better job of teaching all the pupils according to their individual differences, rates of progress, growth, and development.

Because of last year's success with the program, the Nongraded Primary is being extended to the Third Grade or the third year of school work. It is not a program of acceleration. It is a program for enrichment.

Please keep this letter for future reference.

Sincerely yours,
Principal

Table C

PROGRESS CHECK LIST

FOR GROUPING BEGINNERS IN LEVEL I

Nongraded Primary Program
Elementary Division

(To be accomplished after the second week, but not later than the sixth week)

Pupil's Name..... Age.....

Teacher..... Date.....

1. Has the child been enrolled in the Preschool Program for the Non-English speaking children?
2. Can the child understand and follow simple directions in English?
3. Does the child use English well enough to identify the characters in the book, to make simple oral sentences, and to relate events in stories?
4. Does this child need additional oral work to understand English?
5. Does this child have the academic potential to progress at an average or above average rate of learning if he had additional oral work in English?
6. Is this child's problem mental slowness rather than a language handicap?
7. Check one of the following:

☐ The child works well with supervision, appears interested and desires to class work; follows simple directions with little supervision; has good motor skills. (Fast)

☐ The child workers will with supervision, appears interested and desires to participate; however, he is slightly immature to motor skills and/or is inhabited due to shyness. (Average)

☐ The child needs intense supervision; has poor motor skills; emotional problems are evident. (Slow)

☐ The child shows signs of being mentally slow or retarded.

Table D

PROGRESS CHECK LIST

LEVEL I

Nongraded Primary Program
Elementary Division

Pupil's Name..... Age.....

Teacher..... Date.....

READING (Check Appropriate Ratings)

	AA	AV	BA
Adjustment	_____	_____	_____
Language Growth	_____	_____	_____
Picture Reading — Concept Building	_____	_____	_____
Ear Training — Auditory Perception	_____	_____	_____
Likenesses and Differences — Visual Perception	_____	_____	_____
Kinesthetic Development	_____	_____	_____

Date Completed.....

MATHEMATICS

	AA	AV	BA
Uses Number Line	_____	_____	_____
Relationships of Numbers 1 to 10	_____	_____	_____
Ordinal Counting to 10	_____	_____	_____
One-to-One Correspondence in Sets	_____	_____	_____
Square, Circle, Triangle, Rectangle	_____	_____	_____

Date Completed.....

GENERAL REMARKS:

(Rating Key: AA—Above Average; AV—Average; BA—Below Average)

Table E

PROGRESS CHECK LIST

LEVEL VII

Nongraded Primary Program
Elementary Division

Pupil's Name..... Age.....

Teacher..... Date.....

READING

(Check Appropriate Ratings)

	AA	AV	BA
VOCABULARY			
Knows Basal Words			
Knows New Basal Words			
WORD MEANING			
Knows Definition of Words			
Knows Word Relationships, Phrase and Sentence Meaning			
WORD STUDY SKILLS			
Phonetic Analysis			
Structural Analysis			
COMPREHENSION			
Oral Comprehension			
Written Comprehension			
SPEED AND FLUENCY			
Phrasing Fluency			
Ocular Skill			
Speech Skill			

Date Completed.....

GENERAL REMARKS:

(Rating Key: AA—Above Average; AV—Average; BA—Below Average)

Table F

PROGRESS CHECK LIST

LEVEL VII

Nongraded Primary Program
Elementary Division

Pupil's Name..... Age.....

Teacher..... Date.....

MATHEMATICS

	(Check Appropriate Ratings) AA	AV	BA
NUMERATION			
Understands and is able to use numbers through thousands	_____	_____	_____
Recognizes and can compare sets	_____	_____	_____
OPERATIONS			
Has the ability to make generalizations to apply the arithmetical process for addition, subtraction, multiplication and division as listed in the curriculum content for Level VII	_____	_____	_____
PROBLEM SOLVING			
Has the ability to think through oral and written problems	_____	_____	_____
Has the ability to recognize and understand mathematical sentences	_____	_____	_____
RELATIONS			
Understands that numbers have many names	_____	_____	_____
Understands the commutative and associative laws of addition and multiplication	_____	_____	_____
MEASUREMENT			
Knows uses of measurements presented, monetary values, fractions ½, ⅓, ¼	_____	_____	_____
GEOMETRIC CONCEPTS			
Is able to recognize and define triangle, square, and circle	_____	_____	_____
VOCABULARY			
Understands and uses precise mathematical vocabulary	_____	_____	_____

Date Completed:.....

GENERAL REMARKS:

Table G

REPORT TO PARENTS

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Nongraded Primary
First, Second, and Third Years

* * * *

Growth in reading and arithmetic (in these two subjects only) during the nongraded primary program is shown by the pupil's progress through eight levels. Each level consists of a number of important skills which must be learned before moving to the next level. Each pupil progresses at his own rate and will be advanced step by step as the skills are learned.

* * * *

NAME OF PUPIL .....

YEAR IN SCHOOL AND LEVEL..... SCHOOL YEAR 19..... 19.....

SCHOOL .....

TEACHER .....

PRINCIPAL .....

Table H

SCHOLARSHIP RECORD

Growth in scholarship is essential to the development of the child

		GRADING PERIODS					
		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Reading	Level						
	Quality of work						
Arithmetic	Level						
	Quality of work						
Language							
Spelling							
Handwriting							
Social Studies and Science							

EXPLANATION OF RATINGS

S—Satisfactory Progress I—Improvement Needed

Levels as related to the Basic Reading Program:

LEVEL I ..... Reading Readiness
LEVEL II ..... Pre-Primer
LEVEL III ..... Primer
LEVEL IV ..... First Reader
LEVEL V ..... Second Reader No. 1 (Easy)
LEVEL VI ..... Second Reader No. 2 (Hard)

Signature of Teacher.....

LEVEL VII ..... Third Reader No. 1 (Easy)
LEVEL VIII ..... Third Reader No. 2 (Hard)

Table I

WORK HABITS AND ATTITUDES

These habits and attitudes are desirable for good citizenship

	GRADING PERIODS					
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Works independently						
Puts forth best effort						
Completes work						
Practices self-control						
Is orderly and neat with materials						
Works and plays well with others						
Respects rights and property of others						
Practices good health habits						

ATTENDANCE

Punctual and regular attendance is essential to the progress of the child. On returning to school after absence, the child should bring with him a written statement from the parent explaining the cause of absence.

Days Present						
Days Absent						
Times Tardy						

Table J

NOTE TO PARENTS

It is the aim of the school to do its share in promoting the growth and development of your child. In order that the best program may be planned, it is important that there be close cooperation between the home and the school. You are invited to visit the school and observe and discuss the program and your child's progress in it. The nongraded primary program provides continuous academic experiences for each pupil to enable him to move at his own rate of scholastic growth. The basis for marking Reading and Arithmetic Levels reflects this individual rate of growth in these two subjects. Explanation for the ratings is found inside this report.

* * * *

SIGNATURE OF PARENTS

FIRST REPORT .....
SECOND REPORT .....
THIRD REPORT .....
FOURTH REPORT .....
FIFTH REPORT .....
SIXTH REPORT .....
DATE OF WITHDRAWAL .....
(If pupil leaves the district before the end of the school year.)

RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDED FOR PLACEMENT IN.....
(Level) (Room)

Table K

EVALUATION SHEET

Work Skills	Interpretation Skills	Study Skills	Materials	Test
To recognize vowel sounds and symbols, formulate and apply generalizations based on vowel clues, to hear vowel sounds in two syllable words, to divide syllables, variability of consonant sounds. Combine structural and phonic analysis	Drawing conclusions Cause and effect relationships Making judgements Develop implied meaning		More Friends and Neighbors Controlled Reading Filmstrips Word picture cards My Weekly Reader (Optional)	Basic Reading Test Teacher made Test

EVALUATION:

Children should meet the following standard before being assigned to the next level

Must not miss more than one word in every twenty in basic reading

Must not miss more than one word in every hundred in supplementary reading

Must score average or above on basic reading test

Workbooks and worksheets must display consistent good performances

Table L

TEACHER'S GUIDE

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS TO BE ATTAINED	EVALUATION
Reads orally selections with good phrasing, using correct voice intonations, and observing punctuation to convey meaning	Observe daily reading
Extends ability in purposefully reading (finding the main idea)	
Continues to build a wide and meaningful vocabulary, using synonyms and antonyms; continues to develop sentence sence through increased skills; consistently arranges sentences in order of sequence	
Has wholesome and diversified reading interests, reading for enjoyment and for information	
Spells the words from list correctly in context	Test every Friday and the daily use of the same words in creative writing
Works toward co-ordinated movements	
Forms cursive letters and numerals correctly to moderate degree	
Writes friendly letters of one paragraph, notes of thanks, and letters to classmates who are ill, using capitalization and punctuation correctly	Chap. test 4-5 Booklet test 4-5
Learns parts of speech: nouns, pronouns, and adjectives	
Plans reports and stories: uses a good beginning sentence, tells things in sequential order, and keeps to the subject. Gives and follows directions	
Works with measures: liquid, weight, and temperature	Test, pp. 84-85
Tells time and uses calendar	Test, pp. 110, 111, 123, 129, 147, 148
Reads and writes numbers through 10,000	
Adds and subtracts 2-digit numbers renaming once	
Multiplies and divides through tables of 3's	
Knows simple geometry of points, lines, angles and geometric shapes	
Maintains skill in problem solving	

Table M

TEACHER'S GUIDE

BASAL	*SUPPLEMENTARY	MATERIALS
From Far Away Places (pp. 79-246)	On We Go	Teacher's Manual: From Far Away Places
		Workbook: From Far Away Places
	Fun and Fancy	Teacher's Manual: Fun and Fancy
	Out-of-adoption books	Dictionaries
	Other state adopted tests under 3^2 level	
	Sounds of the Story-teller Story Carnival	
Success in Spelling (Units 10-18)	Supplementary List	
Handwriting (Noble and Noble)		Teacher's Edition: Handwriting Made Easy
Using Good English (chaps. 3-4)		Test booklet published by Laidlaw
Developing mathematics 3 Pages 71-149	Enrichment Pages 86, 112, 124, 149 (For above average groups)	Continued use of Level IX materials
Extra Practice Pages 295, 296, 297, 298		Teacher-made materials of geometric shapes
		Collection of solid objects to represent figures on page 122

*It is impossible to complete all books in the supplementary column. These are good for take-home readers.

TABLE N
NON-GRADED PROGRESS REPORT

	Level I		Level II		Level III		Level IV		Level V		Level VI		Level VII		Level VIII		Level IX		Level X	
	Completed	Partially completed	Completed	Partially completed	Completed	Partially completed	Completed	Partially completed	Completed	Partially completed	Completed	Partially completed	Completed	Partially completed	Completed	Partially completed	Completed	Partially completed	Completed	Partially completed
First year Students			5	14		94	3	28		1					6					
Second year Students				2		6	5	3	2	3	1				113				29	
Third year Students			1	1					3	2	1				15				2	
Fourth year Students								3	1	1					2					
TOTALS:			6	17		100	8	34	6	7	2				136				31	

List the number of students in each level at the end of the school year, showing those who have completed the level and those who have partially completed it.

When completed, return one copy of the Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Schools.

Table O

COMPARISON OF GRADED AND NONGRADED STRUCTURE[1]

(Reprinted by special permission of the publisher.)

Graded Structure	Nongraded Structure
A year of progress in subject matter seen as roughly comparable with a child's year in school.	A year of school life may mean much more or much less than a year of progress in subject matter.
Each successive year of progress seen as comparable to each past year or each year to come.	Progress seen as irregular; a child may progress much more rapidly in one year and quite slowly in another.
A child's progress seen as unified; advancing in rather regular fashion in all areas of development; probably working close to grade level in most subject areas.	A child's progress seen as not unified; he spurts ahead in one area of progress and lags behind in others; may be working at three or four levels in as many subjects.
Specific bodies of content seen as appropriate for successive grade levels and so labeled: subject matter packages grade-by-grade.	Bodies of content seen as appropriate over a wide span of years; learning viewed vertically or longiturinally rather than horizontally.
Adequacy of progress determined by comparing child's attainment to coverage deemed appropriate to the grade.	Adequacy of progress determined by comparing child's attainment to his ability and both to long-term view of ultimate accomplishment desired.
Inadequate progress made up by repeating the work of a given grade: grade failure the ultimate penalty for slow progress.	Slow progress provided for by permitting longer time to do given blocks of work: no repetitions but recognition of basic differences in learning rate.
Rapid progress provided for through enrichment: encouragement of horizontal expansion rather than vertical advancement in work; attempt to avoid moving to domain of teacher above.	Rapid progress provided for both vertically and horizontally: bright children encouraged to move ahead regardless of the grade level of the work; no fear of encroachment on work of next teacher.
Rather inflexible grade-to-grade movement of pupils, usually at end of year.	Flexible pupil movement: pupil may shift to another class at almost any time: some trend toward controlling shifts on a quarter or semester basis.

[1]Goodlad, John I. and Anderson, Robert H., The Nongraded Elementary School, Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1959, p. 58.

Table P

DR. ANDERSON'S REPLY TO CRITICAL ALLEGATIONS MADE OF NONGRADED SCHOOLS[1]

(Reprinted by special permission of the publishers)

Allegation	Dr. Anderson's Comment
1. Nongradedness leads to soft pedagogy; it lacks fixed standards and requirements.	1. This is probably true in the early stages, but as we grow more skillful in curriculum development, appropriate standards for each type of child are likely to emerge. Nongradedness may, indeed, lead us away from soft pedagogy by enabling all youngsters to master what they study.
2. It places an impossible burden on the teacher.	2. Quite true, especially if we persist in having self-contained classrooms! The burden will lift as we find ways of sharing teaching responsibilities.
3. It replaces grade requirements by reading levels.	3. Only in the primitive stages and where nongrading is not well understood.
4. It results in a lack of information on pupil progress to parents.	4. Only when the teachers are lazy, foolish, or incompetent in their reporting.
5. It is difficult to put into practice, because teachers are inadequately and insufficiently prepared.	5. True. Therefore, let's start a revolution in teacher education!
6. It does not have minimal standards for all children.	6. It is better to have standards for each child, is it not?
7. Its curriculum sequence tends to lack specificity and order.	7. Again, if true it may be just as well! What we need, it must be admitted is a far more adequate curriculum. The graded curriculum is scarcely the ideal.
8. It is only an improved means to an unimproved end.	8. This sounds like double-talk, but if the end is individual fulfillment then nongradedness is a better way to get there.
9. It does not guarantee that improved teaching will result.	9. No organization provides such a guarantee. To improve teaching is a very difficult task.
10. It suffers from widespread use and even abuse of the term "nongraded."	10. Amen!
11. There is some difficulty in aligning graded with nongraded schools (for example, a primary unit and a graded intermediate program).	11. This is true only if the graded unit continues to deal with youngsters in an inappropriate way. And even so, it is no problem for the children; the annoyance is only to the grade-minded teachers.
12. Teachers and parents are so conditioned to the graded structure that they continue "grade-mindedness."	12. Yes, but over time this is a disease that can be cured.
13. Extensive records must be kept for each child.	13. Some teachers may regard this as a disadvantage but they are wrong!
14. Planning new methods of reporting to parents demands much time and work from the already heavily burdened faculty.	14. Very true. Administration must make better provision for supporting services (for example, substitute-teacher help) and for retraining teachers in the technology or reporting.

[1]Anderson, Robert H., **Teaching in A World of Change**, Harcourt Brace and World, 1966, pp. 61-63.

Table Q

RELATION OF READING ACHIEVEMENT TO NONGRADED SCHOOLS IN TEXAS

1063 students in four Texas School Districts were studied to identify differences in reading achievement between graded and nongraded pupils within each school district. Each group of students in each school district was given the same reading test at the end of their third year of schooling under each plan. The groups were equated for both intelligence and sex distribution. All children studied had received their first three years of schooling in the same school under either a graded or a nongraded system.

The four school districts chosen were:

A—High socio-economic area, upper middle class
Expenditure per pupil 1964—$341
District ADA—1964—39,593

B—Middle class, average socio economic level
Expenditure per pupil 1964—$369
District ADA—1964—10,832

C—Lower socio economic level, 90% Latin American
Expenditure per pupil 1964—$315
Distrist ADA—1964—68,408

D—Upper middle class, high socio economic level
Expenditure per pupil 1964—$380
District ADA—1964—21,274

Table R

THE RESULTS OF THE TESTS ARE SHOWN IN GRADE LEVEL EQUIVALENTS

	N	Graded Median Reading Achievement	N	Nongraded Median Reading Achievement	Diff.	Chi square test for Median difference
District A	138	3.72	183	3.93	+.23	.17 (not significant)
District B	36	4.21	34	4.62	+.41	.03 (not significant)
District C	226	2.78	109	2.18	—.60	.01 (not significant)
District D	195	4.90	142	4.46	—.44	.02 (not significant)

While districts A and B showed gains in favor of the nongraded groups, districts C and D did not. Neither the gains nor the losses shown were significant at the .05 level of confidence.

The conclusion that no significant difference occurred in any of the schools where the two systems were studied confirms previous studies of the relation between achievement and nongradedness.

Obviously one must conclude that achievement is related to factors other than the presence or absence of a form of nongraded operation.